



HOW TO...

Program Windows Media Center online

A Media Center PC is the perfect way to watch and record all your favourite TV shows, but what if you keep forgetting to set it to record? David Ludlow shows you how to program recordings via the internet

You're going out for the evening and there's something you want to watch on TV. You have a Media Center that can handle the recording, but you've forgotten to set it to record – so what do you do?

To save further programming mishaps, we'll show you how to remotely access your Media Center via the internet using WebGuide3, an add-on for Media Center Edition (MCE). The biggest problem you face is getting access to your PC from the internet. First you need a broadband connection so your PC is always connected. There's also the problem of finding your PC. You can connect directly using your connection's IP address, but it's rare to be given a static address. More commonly, your connection is a leased address, which means it will change over time. Fortunately, Dynamic DNS will help. It lets you use a memorable name for your PC, like for any other website, but this one keeps track of your IP address and updates automatically.

We're assuming that you have a broadband router in place. You need to have its manual to hand, as part of the configuration process requires reconfiguring the router to let web traffic through. Our example uses a US Robotics router, but each manufacturer has a slightly different way of

handling it. We've given you the raw information, but if you're not happy playing with advanced settings it's probably best not to try this.

With this in place, you can use any web browser anywhere in the world to connect to your PC using a simple URL, such as www.mymediapc.com. We'll talk you through setting this up. Best of all, everything we show you is free, using tools you can download from the internet.

1 First, you need to install the web server, IIS, on your PC. You may need your Windows CD, so have it to hand. Open the Control Panel, double-click Add or Remove programs and click Add/Remove Windows Components. Put a tick in the Internet Information Services (IIS) box and click Next. A short installation later and your web server will be running.

2 You can test whether your server is working by opening Internet Explorer and typing <http://127.0.0.1> into the address bar and pressing Return. You should see a password box onscreen. Click Cancel. If you don't see this box, your installation went wrong. Repeat Step 1, but this time remove the tick from the Internet

Information Services (IIS) box and click Next to remove it. Then follow Step 1 again to reinstall and repeat this step.

3 With the web server running, you need to download the WebGuide installer. Visit <http://asciexpress.com/webguide> and click the Download link. Click WebGuide3 Version 3.0.14 and save the file to your desktop. It's only 359KB, so it shouldn't take long to download over a broadband internet connection.

4 Double-click the downloaded Zip file and then double-click the WebGuide3_0_14 install file. Click I Agree on the licence agreement and click Next three times to start the installer. If you haven't installed IIS correctly, you'll see an error message and the installer will not run, so go back to Step 1 and follow the instructions.

5 You need to configure the software using the MCE WebGuide3 Configuration application, which should have popped up during installation. Click the Recorded TV Share, click the Share Folder button and click Yes to apply the settings. This shares your folder on the network

EXPERT TIP

If you want to access your web guide via a computer connected to your network, you can do it directly. Simply note your Media Center's IP address, as in Step 10, and type it into the address bar of another computer's Internet Explorer window.

Creating a fixed IP address

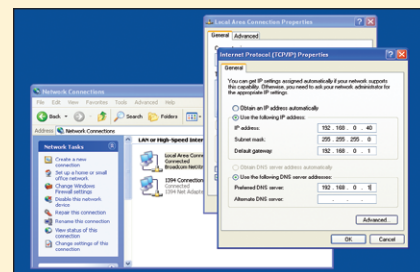
Your router gives out IP addresses automatically, which means that your Media Center PC can have its address changed without you even noticing. This is fine for most computers, but your WebGuide will stop working if this happens. For this reason, it's best to give your Media Center a fixed IP address.

To find out how to choose one, click Start, Run, type in cmd and press Return. Type ipconfig; you'll find your current IP address is something like 192.168.0.10. The first three numbers remain the same (192.168.0) so write them down. The last number varies between one and 254, but your router gives out only a subset of these addresses, leaving you some spare for fixed devices.

To find which you can use, note the Gateway address from the ipconfig screen. You can't use this address as it is the router's. Write down the subnet mask; this will probably be 255.255.255.0.

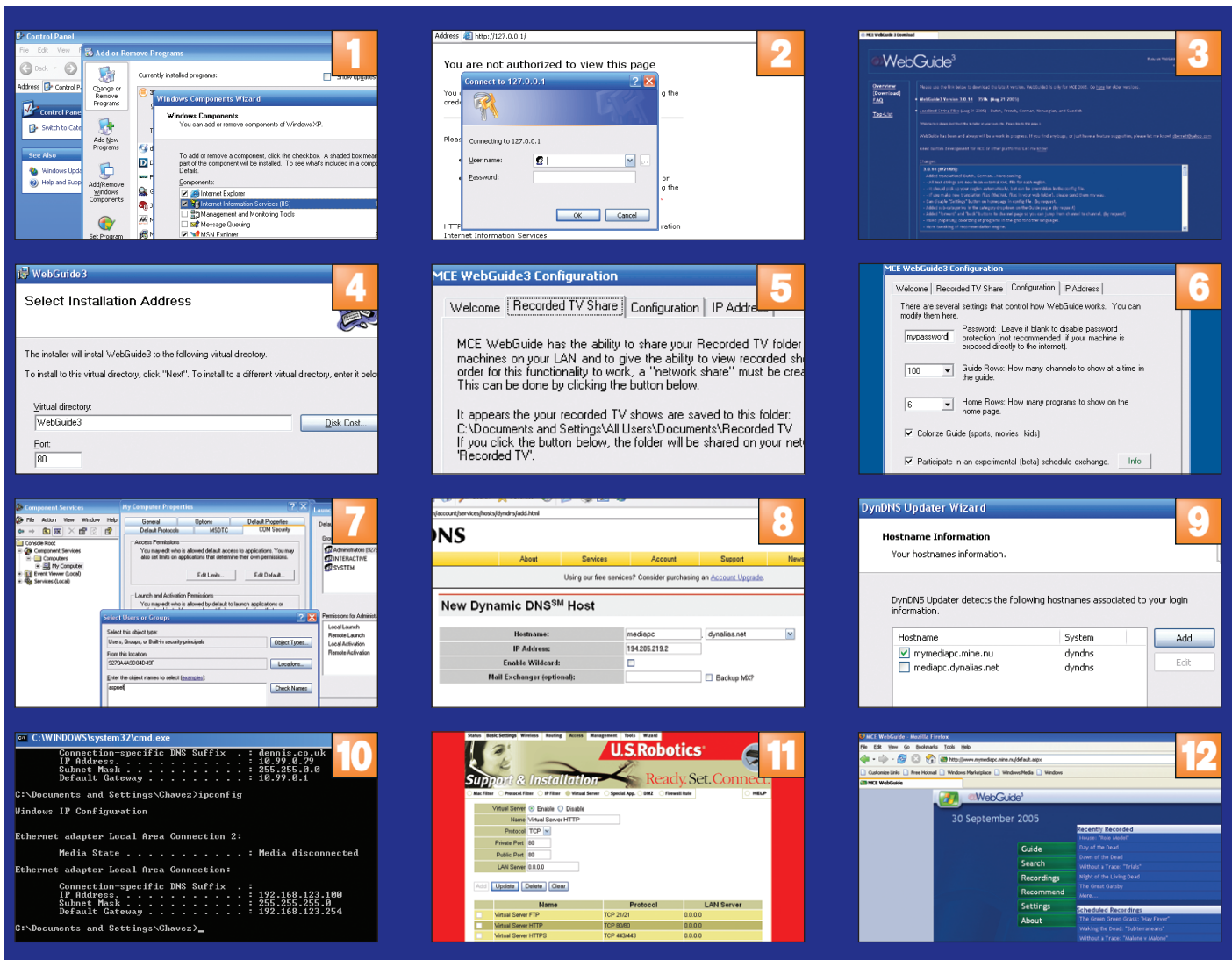
Go to your router's management web page – see its manual for more information – and locate the DHCP settings page, which is often under the LAN settings. This setting says which IP addresses are handed out automatically. Depending on your router, this is a start and end address (192.168.0.2 and 192.168.0.30) or a start address and number, where the number says how many addresses from the start address it should hand out. For example, 192.168.0.2 and 30 would mean the router hands out IP addresses from 192.168.0.2 to 192.168.0.31.

Pick an address that doesn't fit into the DHCP range and isn't the gateway address we wrote down earlier. For both our examples, 192.168.0.40 would do the job. Write a free address for your network. On your Media Center PC, open Control Panel, Network Settings, double-click Local Area Connection and click Properties. Select Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) and click Properties.



▲ Set your PC's IP address in the Network Settings area of Control Panel

Click 'Use the following IP address' and in the box enter the free IP address you wrote down. The Subnet mask and Default gateway addresses are those you wrote down at the start. Finally, for the Preferred DNS server, enter the Default gateway's address and then click OK to apply the settings. Click OK again. Your Media Center should now have a fixed IP address. For more information on how networks work, read our 'Networking for Beginners' feature, on this month's cover disc.



and lets WebGuide see the programmes that you've recorded. When you connect over the internet, you can check that a programme has recorded rather than just set it to record.

6 Go to the Configuration tab and type a password into the Password box. Click the Save Settings button. You can leave the other settings as they are. However, if you're worried about sending anonymous information across the internet, you should remove the tick from the box next to Participate in an experimental (beta) schedule exchange. This will eventually be used to collect information on what other people are recording, so that you can see their favourite programmes and also make recommendations. Click the cross in the top-right corner to shut down the configuration application and click the installation's Close button.

7 The WebGuide isn't ready yet, as you need to configure its security settings. Open the Control Panel and double-click Administrative tools. Double-click Component Services and click on Component Services. Click Unblock if a pop-up window appears. Double-click Computers, right-click on My Computer and select Properties. Go to the Com Security tab and click the Edit Default button under Launch and Activation Permissions. Click the Add button, type aspnet into

the box and click OK. In the Launch Permission window select ASP.NET and click to place a tick in the Allow box for Local Launch and Local Activation. Click OK in all the open dialog boxes.

8 You should now be able to access your guide by opening Internet Explorer and typing <http://127.0.0.1/WebGuide3> into the search bar. If you see a warning message saying that WebGuide can't interact with Media Center, you haven't set your security permissions correctly, so go back to Step 7. If it works, you can't yet access it from the internet. To do this, go to www.dyndns.org, click Services, Dynamic DNS and Add Dynamic DNS. Click register account and fill in the form. Register a new DNS host by typing a hostname (for example, mymediapc) into the box and selecting a domain from the drop-down box (dynalias.net, say). Click Add Host. Your web address will be www.<yourhostname>.<domainname> (www.mymediapc.dynalias.net in our example).

9 To keep your hostname up to date, visit www.dyndns.com/support/clients and click the Download link to get DynDNS Updater. Save the file to your PC and, once it's downloaded, run the installation. Launch the application and click Next twice, click Detect My IP and click Next. Type MCE into the My Group box and click Next. Type in the dyndns.com username

and password that you registered in Step 8 and click Next. Select to Automatically download and click Next. Put a tick next to your hostname, click Next twice then Finish.

10 Click the Start button and select Run. Enter cmd in the dialog box and click OK. Type ipconfig at the command prompt and make a note of your PC's IP address. You may want to give your PC a static IP address, or it can change and stop your web guide from working. See 'Creating a fixed IP address' opposite for details.

11 Connect to your router's configuration web page; its instructions tell you how to do so. You must find the Virtual Server option, located in Advanced settings or under Access. When you find it, create a new rule, call it Virtual Server HTTP, enable it and use the following settings: TCP protocol, private port 80, public port 80, LAN server address as your PC's IP address. Your router's manual will have full instructions.

12 From another PC on the network, open Internet Explorer and type <http://www.<yourhostname>.<domainname>/WebGuide3> (registered in Step 8) into the address bar and press Enter. Type in your password, and you'll be able to set your Media Center to record when you're not at home. **ES**